

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-10 (Cancelled)

Claim 11 (Withdrawn) A system for purifying an easily polymerizable compound which comprises:

- a column for purifying an easily polymerizable compound
- a vacuum portion for vacuuming a gas containing the easily polymerizable compound from the column; and
- a liquid supply equipment for supplying a liquid containing a polymerization inhibitor to the vacuum portion to thereby come into contact with the gas.

Claim 12 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, where in the vacuum portion comprises at least one or more steam ejectors and at least one or more gas and liquid contact chambers.

Claim 13 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the gas and liquid contact chamber is a barometric condenser, and the liquid serves to cool the barometric condenser.

Claim 14 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the gas and liquid contact chamber is a surface condenser, and the inside surface of the surface condenser is wetted with the liquid.

Claim 15 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the vacuum portion comprises a liquid ejector.

Claim 16 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the vacuum portion comprises a nash pump.

Claim 17 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the vacuum portion comprises a liquid ejector and a nash pump.

Claim 18 (Withdrawn) The system according to claim 11, wherein the easily polymerizable compound is (meth)acrylic acid and/or (meth)acrylate.

Claims 19-28 (Cancelled)

Claim 29 (New) A process for inhibiting polymerization in a vacuum section of an easily polymerizable compound purification system,

wherein the purification system comprises:

the purifying section, including a distillation column and a condenser, and

the vacuum section, including a steam ejector and a gas and liquid contact chamber and said vacuum section capable of reducing pressure in said purifying section,

said process comprising the steps of:

distilling an easily polymerizable compound in a distillation column and condensing the resulting distilled compound in the condenser in the purifying section,

permitting an exhaust gas containing the easily polymerizable compound which is not condensed through the condenser, to flow into a gas and liquid contact chamber through said steam ejector in the vacuum section and

supplying a liquid containing a polymerization inhibitor to the gas and liquid contact chamber, thereby inhibiting the polymerization in the vacuum section .

Claim 30 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the vacuum section comprises at least one gas and liquid contact chamber, and supplying the liquid containing the polymerization inhibitor to the first gas and liquid contact chamber.

Claim 31 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the vacuum section comprises at least two gas and liquid contact chambers, and supplying the liquid containing the polymerization inhibitor to the first and the second gas and liquid contact chambers.

Claim 32 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the gas and liquid contact chamber is a surface condenser, and further comprising wetting the inside surface of the condenser uniformly with the liquid.

Claim 33 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the gas and liquid chamber is a barometric condenser, and the liquid serves to cool the barometric condenser.

Claim 34 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the easily polymerizable compound is (meth)acrylic acid and/or (meth)acrylate.

Claim 35 (New) The process according to claim 29, wherein the polymerization inhibitor is at least one member selected from the group consisting of hydroquinone, methoquinone,

manganese acetate, phenothiazine, nitrosophenol, cupferron, dibutyl dithiocarbamic acid copper salt and N-oxyl compounds.